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NOTES FROM BIRMINGHAM

latter rather predominating. Side by side with beautiful old lace can be found some horrible new lace. Embroideries and woven stuffs are better. No nation has a style of ornament as decidedly national as the Scotch. These embroideries are carefully thought out, exact in execution, a little monotonous in their per-



A TABLE
BY WHYLLIE & LOCHHEAD

fection. Reason and calculation are taking the place of taste and artistic impulse in this craft.

I have tried to speak of the 'features' of the Exhibition in a not too strictly critical spirit. It is needless to add up the figures and draw the balance. Whoever can read will find it out for himself.

W. FRED.

NOTES FROM BIRMINGHAM

'BETTER late than never' is an adage that holds good in criticism as in other things—over pressure of matter must alone account for our delay in mentioning the most recent exhibition at the Graves' Galleries, since it was a 'one-man' show of unusual merit and interest.

The artist, Mr. Charles Whymper, appealed to a threefold public—artists, sportsmen, and naturalists—and from each he received the approval which was undeniably his due.

The skilful rendering of game-birds is not an easy task, there is always a danger of giving that still-life effect which is so unpleasantly suggestive of the early Victorian glass shade. Mr. Whymper happily steers clear of this difficulty by his painstaking observation of characteristic and life-like attitude; the results obtained in the portrayal of some of these pheasants, partridges, grouse and water-fowl testify to years of earnest devotion, certainly as artist and probably as sportsman, to the study of birds under every possible aspect.

But it is not in the representation of the feathered tribe alone, that Mr. Whymper's art claims attention; he has achieved a great success in the painting called *A Real Big Stag*, in which he collaborated with the late Mr. Joseph Wolf under whom he studied. An avowedly joint production of this sort is a rare thing in modern art—and not, perhaps, generally speaking advisable—but in this case the combination was evidently felicitous, the head of the stag which faces the spectator is impressive and beautifully poised. We noticed too among the 'big game' a small picture of African animals, in which some giraffes and springbok, standing at a water-hole, were very ably realised.

Messrs. Henry Graves and Co. are producing a photogravure of *Killed as he tops the Fence*, which is one of the largest of the bird pictures, an excellent canvas depicting a flight of grouse; the one bird that has fallen to a well-aimed shot is particularly well given. These pictures in point of colour, accurate draughtmanship and

JAPANESE CURIOS

artistic perception may worthily be compared with the art of Thorburn, who has so frequently chosen similar subjects and made a great name amongst sportsmen for his truthful work.

It is clearly a labour of love with Mr. Whymper to produce these paintings, a fact which was sufficiently recognised by the appreciation of the numerous people who went to see his work.

We had occasion some little time ago to mention some of the artistic possessions of Mr. George Mackey, who is the proprietor of a happy hunting-ground for curio-seekers here—we might add and elsewhere—since artists, collectors, members of the profession, and famous people generally from different parts of the country are still more frequently to be met with than those indigenous to Birmingham.

The reason is not far to seek ; Mr. Mackey has a widespread reputation as a connoisseur of Japanese *objets d'art*, and he is continually adding valuable and unique specimens to his already large store, working with the true collector's instinct for years, to obtain special treasures. He has recently been successful in acquiring an extremely interesting collection, rich in choice examples of fine lacquer, exquisite carvings in wood and ivory, metal work by the celebrated Komai, and some exceedingly good swords and

daggers ; the furniture of some of the latter consists of rare old enamel.

We were particularly struck by a marvellous ivory by Shiozam, no larger than a netsuké : it represents a toad perched on the lid of an old basket, lying in wait for a spider, which is emerging through one of the holes. The look of age and dust is really remarkable ; the skin of the toad, too, is admirably rendered.

Of quite another character, but equally fascinating, is a hanging flower vase in the form of a Japanese zither, made in iron with incrustations of gold and silver amongst very charming vine tendrils. It is one of Komai's earliest works, and is modestly signed 'Komai, the greatest man in the world.'

Another object, though perfect in workmanship and finish, is somewhat gruesome, it is a skull, almost the actual size, in gold lac with a number of carved ivory demons crawling about it, in and out of the eye sockets and so forth, in a most life-like manner : by its side is a skull in carved ivory, almost as large, with a snake coiled round it, making a meal of some frogs which have apparently chosen this unsafe retreat as their home. It is interesting to note that this skull was once in Mr. Lawson Tait's collection and was greatly valued by him on account of its wonderful accuracy.

MODERN VIENNA ARCHITECTURE AND A VIENNA ARCHITECT, BY OTTO STOESSL

THE buildings of every epoch are monuments of its political history. One can read from them the ideas upon which the events are founded. No art is, like architecture, the expression of the social division of a period and so entirely tied to its social convictions and aims. A. Lichtwark, in developing this idea with reference to German architecture, has contrasted two essential types which sometimes meet or cross each other : the town of the citizen and the town of the princes. On this depend the whole history and style of architecture in

general and detail. It is, in fact, possible to recognise the characteristics of the buildings of a town through the study of its political development—democratic or aristocratic.

A work of this kind with special reference to Vienna would be of particular interest. The buildings of this town embrace the essence of various periods, blending them gracefully to a curious unity of effect. Up to 1848 Vienna was the perfect type of a royal town. The palaces of the aristocracy have everywhere elbow'd themselves into the best places and